



### **Week 3 Assignment: SIS Evaluation**

#### **Overview**

This week you will evaluate your district's student information system. Use the document entitled **Evaluation of Your Local School District's Student Information System (SIS) Criteria and Directions**, which is included in this assignment, to help guide your work.

**Rubric**

Use the following rubric to guide your work.

Tasks ↓	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	
<b>Sources and Information</b>	The student selects, consults with, and draws from appropriate and insightful information sources. <b>(Max. of 5 pts)</b>	The student selects, consults with and draws from, overly general information sources. <b>(Max. of 3 pts)</b>	The student selects, consults with, and draws from inappropriate information sources. <b>(Max. of 1 pt)</b>	No information sources. <b>(0 points)</b>
<b>Justification of Opinion and Point of View</b>	Opinion is shared and is supported with insightful, carefully selected details. <b>(Max. of 5 pts)</b>	Opinion is shared with marginal evidentiary support or explanation of thought. <b>(Max. of 3 pts)</b>	Personal statements are shared with no evidentiary support or explanation of thought. <b>(Max. of 1 pt)</b>	No personal statement. <b>(0 points)</b>
<b>Complexity of Understanding and Inferring</b>	Reflections and conclusions reached are insightful and perceptive. <b>(Max. of 5 pts)</b>	Reflections and conclusions reached are minimal and simplistic. <b>(Max. of 3 pts)</b>	Reflections and conclusions contain little or no personal insights. <b>(Max. of 1 pt)</b>	No reflection. No conclusion. <b>(0 points)</b>
<b>Writing</b>	The student generates writing that is highly relevant, appropriately specific, and clearly and completely stated. <b>(Max. of 5 pts)</b>	The student generates writing that is relevant and reasonably specific, but may not be clearly or completely stated. <b>(Max. of 2 pts)</b>	The student does not generate writing that is relevant, specific, clearly or completely stated. <b>(Max. of 1 pt)</b>	No writing. <b>(0 points)</b>

## Directions

For this week's assignment, you will evaluate and discuss your local school district's Student Information System (SIS). Your local school district employs a SIS which handles many of your district's needs involving the management, sharing, and reporting of student information. For this assignment, you may want to consult with your campus' SIS manager, district SIS managers, and other teachers who use the SIS. You will want to ensure that the sources you draw from are appropriate and insightful so you will be able to formulate an informed opinion. You may even draw from your personal experience (if relevant) with your district's SIS. These consultations will aid you in the evaluation of the efficacy of your district's SIS.

Before you begin, here are some factors to consider when evaluating your school district's Student Information System. The factors below will help guide your thinking:

- 1. Total cost of software ownership including reoccurring ongoing costs.** Many products have various tactics to appear inexpensive, yet have higher reoccurring or start up and configuration costs (i.e. software licenses, training, software maintenance and support).
- 2. Feature set.** What are the base features of the software, as well as the secondary features? Most school districts select a SIS with as many functions built into the system as possible. What functions does your school district's SIS serve?
- 3. Texas-specific functionality.** Texas is a unique state in that it requires many specific reports and assessments from its school districts. Items such as Texas-specific tests and attendance reporting require school districts to provide pre-identification files and loading of test scores back into the system. How does your district's software provide a solution for these requirements by the state of Texas? Evaluate the software's ability to handle these processes.
- 4. Ease of use and reporting.** With the many data elements your school district is required by the state to track, users need to have an easy and intuitive solution to maximize productivity and use of their time. Staff resources can be overburdened by a product that is cumbersome to use. Is your school district's software user friendly, offering ease of navigation? Does the software ever require duplication of data entry?
- 5. Customer support and experience of the support staff.** Customer support and service is as important as the solution itself. During the evaluation of your school district's software, you will need to assess the types of support available: e-mail, telephone, Web and the vendor's commitment to quality of support. Does the vendor provide timely support with useful answers?
- 6. Thorough training in the software system.** Are your school district's users adequately trained in the proper use of the software system? In order to ensure that the use of the SIS is successful, all users need to be properly trained on the product. Are your school district's users trained through the district, through the vendor, or both? Were you trained in you district's SIS? If so, was the training adequate, and thorough? Additionally, there should also be a component available for ongoing training.

Fill out the chart included in this assignment with the information you learn about your district's SIS.

This assignment is due no later than 11:59 p.m. on the seventh day of Week 3.

### Workspace

Fill out the chart below to complete this assignment. Be sure to address all the items listed on the previous page. The boxes will expand as you type.

#### Student Information System Evaluation Chart

Areas To Address	Your Findings and Evaluation
Total Cost of Software Ownership (including reoccurring and ongoing costs)	<p>Within the last few years my district, Highland Park ISD, has bridged over to a new Student Information System. Previously we utilized Pearson (SASI) but have recently migrated to Skyward. I discussed Skyward with Chris Cunningham, Highland Park ISD's employee in charge of SIS administration. Unless otherwise stated, the information provided throughout this assignment is from the interviews I conducted with Chris Cunningham.</p> <p>Skyward migration costs: First year with startup: \$208,000 Second (current) year: \$38,600 (maintenance)</p> <p>The librarian (AKA media specialist) on my campus, Jennifer Hampton, stated she thought that when our district was going through and choosing between different SIS vendors that Skyward made many promises. Unfortunately, now that it is being utilized in our district, we are finding that we often need the company to write code to do the features that were promised. Unfortunately having Skyward write the code is an additional cost.</p>
Software Features Set	<p>Skyward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Houses all PEIMS reportable data<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student demographics</li><li>• all student enrollment</li></ul></li></ul> <p>Skyward manages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• all scheduling for classes</li><li>• all grades (teacher grade book)</li><li>• attendance</li><li>• eligibility for athletics</li><li>• Family Portal: web access for parents</li></ul>

	<p>and students to access student grades and assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disaggregating TAKS information</li> <li>• standardized testing scores</li> <li>• food services: parents can put money into system ( debit against money on account) functions for nurse to manage health records (is an option that my district does not utilize)</li> <li>• Special programs module (is an option that my district does not utilize)</li> </ul>
Texas-specific Functionality	<p>The main component of Skyward's SIS is PEIMS reporting. All students' demographics are in Skyward which has a prebuilt export utility that allows us to export all of our pre-identification files into a specific format. Once the data is exported into a comma delineated file (usually CSV) then we can upload into the third party application.</p> <p>For example: The state requires student information to be in a specific format for our end of course testing at the high school. The exported file from Skyward will upload into state's website for required documentation. Skyward has the prebuilt export to make this information export "easily" into the state's online access.</p> <p>Also Skyward has an importing utility for when our district receives test scores and managed test scores. Our district can just import the test data file into Skyward. Teachers can then utilize the information reports for disaggregated scores.</p>
Ease of Use and Reporting	<p>Reporting element of Skyward is easy to use for someone who is trained but is not necessarily easy for a novice. It is fairly user friendly and does offer ease of navigation. The convenience you be either a pro or con. It is a web-based application so our SIS can be utilized from any machine with internet capability. The down-side is that is a web-based application. The user experiences</p>

	<p>speed issues since you are relying on a browser instead of the client on your computer. Web-based is contingent on the browser being utilized. Since parents use a variety of browsers (Safari, Firefox, Internet Explorer, etc), district has not control over how the parents' browser will function.</p> <p>My Campus SIS operator does not think the SIS (Skyward) has an ease of use but does appreciate the features available for reports. She feels the system is written in a language (not referring to programming but the wording of the reports feature) that is very technical and difficult to understand for an average person. She said that if she works with it long enough, she can pull up pretty much any report she needs, though.</p> <p>The librarian (AKA media specialist) on my campus said that she appreciates being able to utilize and find parent emails.</p>
Customer Support and Experience of the Support Staff	<p>Chris Cunningham stated that if he was brand new to student management (if he had not been familiar with another SIS), he would be fine with Skyward's support. HPISD's Student Information System was formerly Pearson (SASI) which offered excellent support compared to Skyward's. Since he has seen and used a system that exceeded expectations, Skyward does not have comparable customer service. Chris stated that if HPISD has a problem with the Pearson SIS we received a support person instantaneously with the first call. On the other hand, Skyward requires the person who is having the problem submit a trouble ticket for a service person to call back. The initial service call-back could take anywhere from a few minutes to several hours. Chris finds this frustrating when the district is having problems with the SIS. Usually the reports need to be created in a time sensitive window of opportunity. Chris could not express enough that if he had not become accustomed to the</p>

	wonderful customer support that Pearson exhibited, he would probably be neutral concerning Skyward's support. Skyward's support seems to be an industry standard.
Thorough User Training in the Software System	<p>The training philosophy for our district when Skyward was introduced was a "train the trainer" model. Chris Cunningham had each campus provide teachers or staff who would be the trainer for their grade level or department. (For example: The High School English Department sent one person to be trained. That English teacher then went back to the High School and trained all the High School English teachers on Skyward.) For the preliminary training, Skyward sent trainers to train these campus trainers to learn the different components such as: grade book, attendance, reporting, etc.</p> <p>The teachers I spoke to do not feel specifically trained though. The person in charge of training only gave teachers a "need to know" training. In other words, they only trained the teachers on exactly what they needed to know without giving any other training on other parts the teachers might find useful. The teachers expressed that if they need to run a report, they have to "fiddle" around in the system to create the report that they need.</p>